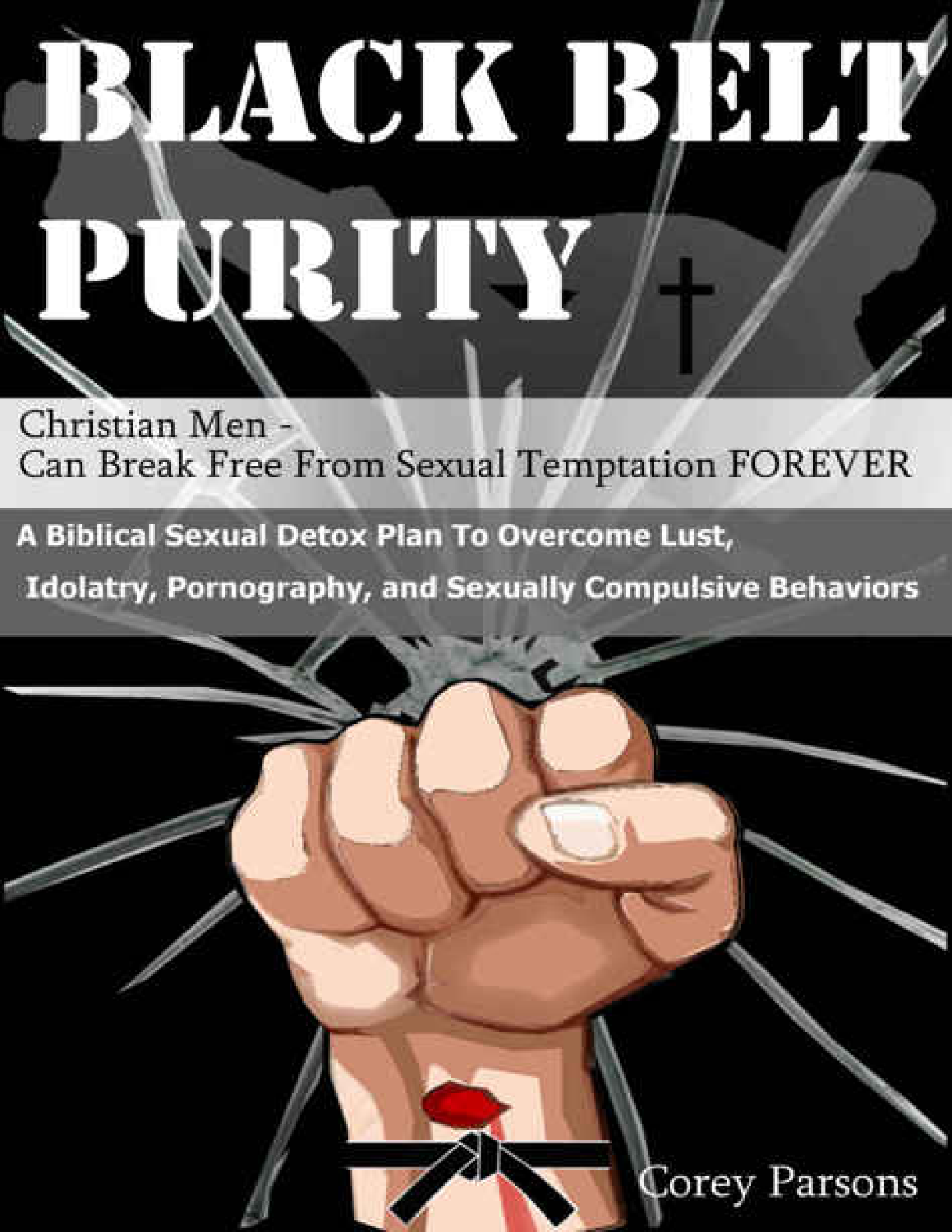


BLACK BELT PURITY



Christian Men -
Can Break Free From Sexual Temptation FOREVER

A Biblical Sexual Detox Plan To Overcome Lust,
Idolatry, Pornography, and Sexually Compulsive Behaviors



Corey Parsons

Black Belt Purity

Christian Men Can Overcome Sexual Temptation Forever

Corey Parsons

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Why I Wrote this Book

Several years ago a person I respected was removed from their position in the church because of their involvement looking at pornography. I cowered in the back when I heard this because I too struggled silently in this area. As I looked around, I knew I was not alone as the only one in the congregation. Then a few months afterward, a friend of mine who I thought was impervious to sexual temptation was caught up in an affair which ended up destroying his marriage & family.

It seemed to me, from my background, that most men struggle to some degree in this area but really have had nowhere to turn for help inside the church. Because I hid my struggle & did not face my issue I watched many of the areas of my life unravel as well.

Sexual immorality gains its grip on most Christian men at a young age. Many of us end up accepting it as a "guy thing". Many young men feel the pressure to measure up & be real men by giving in to different types of sexual immorality. These "guy thing" rationalizations for many Christian Men have become hooks that have kept them acting out and deepening a bondage. Many live silently in a cycle of futile efforts to stop the immoral behaviors for years with nowhere to turn.

I wrote this book because I felt like Christian men needed real guidance in this area to step out of the shadows to find biblical help. My hope was not to invent a path that teaches us how to change the negative behavior on the outside, but instead, utilize the relevant truths in the Bible which allow us to experience lasting change at a heart level while growing closer to Christ Jesus in the process. I'm not pretending to be some guru or expert. I'm not pretending to be

superior or super spiritual in this area, but I have been a Christian for over 25 years and have struggled, faced the same common temptations, and have found areas in this fight that can help myself and others win. I wanted to be able to offer an opportunity for Christian men to find real change from a Christian view that doesn't just point to the minutia of behavioral tasks and steps that are available outside the church. I wanted this book to point back to the transforming power of God in lieu of what I have found in the more shallow personal efforts based tasks that are the norm outside the church. I am a brother in Christ that is trying to offer hope to other Christian men who struggle with many of the same things I have.

I probably have to clarify that I'm not offering medical advice but rather direction toward what I would hope is Christian character transformation. Our choices add up to character. Persevering in right choices builds good character and

perfects faith. Every choice builds our character to become like the world or to become like Jesus. I am hoping that these pages offer guidance to heart level, character building change through the strength of Jesus.

When I was a kid, and heard about launching rockets to the moon and exploring space, it was said that if the direction was even 1 degree off, the rocket would end up thousands of miles off course in the wrong direction. We can spiritually send our Christian beliefs in the wrong direction by trying to fit the Bible into our current idea systems to justify what we've done or rationalize our thinking to suit a cultural opinion. One area I see this unfortunate misdirection is in how we base our decisions toward Christian healing on a secular recovery system.

We start our healing looking to lean on Christ's healing power, but end up on a parallel path that teaches us how to attain healing through breaking denial, surrendering to the process, and digging through the causes of our past. Though these exercises can be awakening and are based on truth, they are too shallow to reach the deep waters of truth that Christian men need to find hope and real change.

I have found that the Bible is relevant and provides current insight into attaining fidelity and a heart of purity. In this short book I wanted to show that the Bible has answers that can bring healing, forgiveness and freedom from this bondage of sexual immorality at its lustful roots.

The truth is, healing from involvement in lust, or any sexual immorality involves a process of overcoming. It can involve

stitches, scars, time, and repairing the collateral damage we've caused. This process of overcoming takes training & can prove to take some perseverance through the pain of sore spiritual muscles. It can be a process of stepping forward, taking two steps back, and then reevaluating the next step forward.

I think this book can offer real Bible based solutions to real world problems that Christian men face in today's sexually prevalent landscape. It will help to equip us to win the battle with lust, porn, adultery, masturbation and other sexually compulsive actions.

Most people who will pick up this book are in need of finding answers and help. I know that they will find hope that God is in control and is looking forward to helping us transform into the Christian men that he intended us to be. He has plans to help

us overcome and to bring us to transparent freedom in Christ Jesus.

Proverbs 4:18

The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

2 Corinthians 3:16-18

...but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

Who Should Read This Book

This book is for Christian Men looking to overcome Lust, Porn, Sexually Compulsive Behavior, and Sexual Impurity. It is for Christian Men who want to regain or live a life of Integrity and purity before God

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Quick Start Changing Behavior?

Proverbs 21:3

To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

Changing our negative behavior is critical, but really it's not the end all in purity. It's really not even the beginning of change. All behavior good and bad is a manifestation of the heart (Matthew 12:34, James 1:14). While changing behavior is necessary, starting with behavior is kind of like the saying of putting the cart before the horse. Dealing with the change is addressing the final stages of sin leading to death. If we step backward through the process, it ends with behavior and consequences. But leading to that is the sin, preceded by the desire, preceded by the thoughts and condition of the heart.

If it were broken down into steps it would lead with a personal. compounded belief system, I thoughts and justifications around that and the entitlements that we give ourselves to think and act, then our rationalized lusts & desires lead to actions, the evidence of this entire process. Finally our sinful actions reap the consequences.

As Christian men, we realize that until we accept Christ, our belief system is completely bent towards fulfilling the needs of self. So the first step would be to accept Christ into our life or recommit to living a path that follows Christ Jesus.

Step 1 - Accept Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior to change our heart condition.

If you are already a Christian, then you understand that accepting Christ is a beginning point in a new life. This step can be an awakening to the awareness that you need Jesus's help, and may be your opportunity to recommit your life to Christ. Jesus is knocking at the door of our heart and waiting for us to open that door (Revelation 3:20) to let him heal our needs.

Many of the verses that support this commitment are in the bible, in the book of Romans. A list those verses are here for your benefit with a reference note by it:

- Romans 3:10 No one is worthy of being saved by their own merit.
- Romans 3:23 - All have sinned.
- Romans. 5:12 - We are sinful at our core. Our nature is sinful.
- Romans 5:8 - God loves us, even at our darkest points in sin.
- Romans 6:23 - Sin brings death, while accepting Jesus brings life.
- Romans 10:9-10 - If we confess with our mouth & believe in our heart that Jesus is Lord we will be saved.
- Romans 10:13 - Whoever calls on Jesus will be saved.

Going through these verses, and applying it to our hearts and lives is the beginning part of salvation. It is also a very good point of recommitment to Christ. Through this process we are becoming reconciled to Christ. We are no longer our own but instead belong to Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 says we become a new creation when we accept Christ. Also, one of the most comforting scriptures for Christian men who have sinned and commit their lives back to Jesus is Romans 8:1 which says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Step 2 - Become aware of our thoughts and bring it into the Gods light.

Our thoughts have been developed by a sinful heart condition. This step would be to recognize a thought at the point of initiation and assess the direction it is going. We need to recognize these thoughts, both good and bad by taking them captive, and our minds can be renewed as we acknowledge and push out the sinful thoughts. Sin begins with seeds planted by unholy thinking. It doesn't matter how the thought is activated, because at our core we are driven by sin. If it is a sinful thought, it is from our old sinful nature. If the thought is in line with God's will, it is beneficial to transforming our life into God's will. Because we are now a new creation, God can lift us out of our blindness and we can recognize thoughts that don't line up with God or his plan. Our choices, beliefs, opinions, cultural input, and background have contributed to the condition of our heart. These inputs fuel our thinking. I have listed some verses that help us understand the link between our heart condition and our thoughts:

- 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 - This verse is a call to demolish entrenched belief systems and take our thoughts captive.

- Psalms 94:11 - Our thoughts are futile, incapable of self-effecting change
- Matthew 15:18-19 - From our heart come evil thoughts which appears in what we speak.

Step 3 - Become aware that our desires are being driven by our thoughts

Thoughts that are rationalized and allowed to go unchecked will plant themselves into our beliefs and result in desires. For example, if we believe that success or happiness equates to having a lot of money, we will have a thought process in place that rationalizes or justifies working hard, sacrificing financially, or working at building a retirement by saving more than we spend. We may also justify financing nicer homes, or cars, or making efforts to outwardly show that we have money. The initial thoughts that rationalize our thoughts of fulfillment, drive the desires to have the nicer car or home which goes beyond our human need for shelter or just having transportation to get from point A to point B. It becomes a statement of our values and beliefs.

Purity has the same process. Our thoughts come from our heart condition. Our sinful thoughts fuel desires that lust, hate, slander, and justify the direction we are headed toward sin. Our captivated thoughts think on heavenly, holy things. They reflect, redirect, and question the validity of rationalizations while pushing the impure thoughts out.

If we embrace a belief that our sexual needs deserve to be filled, then this distorted thinking will lead us to thinking that our normal marital sexual fulfillment isn't satisfying enough. It can lead to thoughts or a desire that something outside of our marriage bed may be better, or more fulfilling. As you can see, this belief in our sinful heart will

lead to distorted, sinful thoughts that justify immoral desire, and ultimately actions that are outward evidence of our corruptness. We may also, argue that the degree of our sin as thoughts being better than sinful actions, but according to Jesus, we are accountable even to the level of thought.

I've listed some scriptures and notes that supports our actions are driven by desires and thoughts.

- Proverbs 5:21-23 - We are led astray by foolishness.
- 2 Corinthians 11:2-3 - Our minds can be led astray by deceptions, external and internal.
- Jude 1:16-19 - We instinctively follow our sinful desires.
- James 1:13-18 - Our temptation to sin comes after desire and leads to death.

Step 4 - Begin to change the sinful behaviors.

We begin to change our behavior by changing what's happening internally. Jesus calls us a temple of the Holy Spirit when we become a Christian. Our obligation is to begin running toward God in purity, adding to our faith; goodness, kindness, and self-control. We need to begin to implement disciplines that strengthen self-control of the vessel that God has given (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8). We are not our own (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), we have been purchased; therefor to act out in this vessel of Gods property, we are vandalizing the temple. Even if we are at a starting point where the temple that God has purchased is a shack, or in a state of complete brokenness, (because we are all broken) he has provided methods for bringing a stressed broken temple back to restoration. In our brokenness God has methods to restore us within his grace. Restoration is often more than just asking Christ into our hearts. When Christians do ask Christ into their heart and

they realize they're struggling with the same struggles as before they were Christians it could be easy to rule out methods. But God's grace does not void out methods toward restoration, though behavioral change can be a scapegoat replacing the inner heart shifting change that God's grace brings. The behavior change comes from reinforcing the heart change. This can be done by adding character traits to our belief patterns. I've listed some verses below to give a boost toward behavior change, with notes:

- 2 Peter 1:3-10- We have all things given to us by God that are necessary to escape corruption of desire and prevent us from falling into actions that aren't aligned with God's will.
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - We are a temple and were purchased by God when Jesus died and rose again.

Step 5 - Add new healthy patterns of behavior and deal with the current real consequences of our past behavior.

We will need to begin living in restoration. Our past is our past and restoration is the process of healing through the consequences of what we've done. We do have personal accountability for our actions and thoughts. We will stand individually before God and have to make an account of our actions. While this is the case, God's forgiveness is our covering, and he is the author, perfecter and restorer of our faith (Romans 4:7-8, Hebrews 12:1-2). We need to change our old patterns and contemplate Christ's ways.

- Romans 5:3-6 - Suffering produces perseverance, character and hope.
- Hebrews 12:1-2 - God is perfecting our faith.
- Philippians 3:10-16 - Move past what is behind us taking hold of God's will for us.

- Proverbs 4:18 - Our path is growing in clarity and purity.

These steps are the starting point to get us moving in the right direction toward purity. The rest of the topics in this short book will work to us to clarify and develop a heart that is transformed into a heart for God.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray and accept Jesus as Lord or recommit your life to Jesus. You can pray the following prayer if you are uncertain what to pray:
 1. "Lord, I need help and to be rescued. I am not capable of rising out of the messes I've made without you. Forgive me of all my sins/wrongs and lead me toward knowing you for the rest of my life. Thank you for saving me."
2. Read Psalms 103:1-22
3. Reinforce these ideas by thinking through where these steps may have been present in your life before accepting Christ Jesus, and how being a new creation will change this process. If this is the first time you have prayed to begin living a life for Jesus, then write the date down as the day you became a new creation. If you are recommitting your life to Jesus, write the date down as the beginning of your healing.

Begin a Life of Purity Today

Leviticus 11:44

I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy.

The church can no longer let the issue of Christian men struggling with impurity go unnoticed, and cannot deny that this is a spiritual epidemic stunting the faith of Christian men. Our Christian brothers need biblical direction. We need strong and specific preventative measures & a real plan to live in purity. All too often we base our changes on a temporary confession. We start the process understanding that we are in sin and need change. But this initial understanding is only that; initial understanding. Our confession of our sin and our initial understanding that we've made mistakes is only the starting gate for transformation to a life of purity. Change is a process of spiritual renewal that can only be achieved under the direction, the principles, guidance & grace of Christ.

It is obvious by reports in the public that Christians aren't immune to falling into impurity. Stories of infidelities come into the public light so often that these discoveries are progressively less shocking. Sadly, it is so common, that I'm sure others, like myself, have become desensitized when leaders are caught in immorality.

If we are to become less desensitized to the stories of immorality; if we are to avoid this same fate, that too many of our Christian leaders have been snared by, there are some important questions that we would need ask as to why committed Christians are committing sexual sin?

Why are even our strong Christian men prone to drifting into this double life?

I believe it is partially because we are an instant gratification culture, and we've abandoned many of the grounding values that the church had. It is more difficult to distinguish between those who are Christian and those who aren't, both in viewpoint and principle. We live in opulence compared to most of the world while we maintain an expectancy that we deserve to get what we want. We have been stirred into an Individualism culture that says what they think, stands alone, seeks differentiation and significance through appearance, and pushes tolerance for every life path available that someone chooses. We have also shifted from Christian thought being the predominant thought to a system that promotes atheism, individualism, and relativism and eroded moral arguments.

The reality of our decomposed values would lean toward some different verses in the Bible that can express our current state. Romans 7:15 says, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." With our orbiting and ambiguous values, we have ended up confused or reducing our values to match our confusion. The easiest route is to follow our instincts and natural tendency (Ephesians 2:2) rather than establishing moral principle.

The normal outcome for non-Christian and Christians alike is to remove inhibition to pursue comfort, and remove pain.

I've heard it said that we sin because we are sinners, we are not sinners because of our sinning. We make selfish mistakes because that is our original nature.

Sexual immorality can be an isolating sin. These problem behaviors or actions naturally tend to lead to secrecy and cover up. The Christian men who have tendency toward these moral collapses have often tried to fix it on their own, carry it on their own, hide it on their own and recover on their own. They tend to imagine that because they think they can handle it on their own, then they are...alone.

That is far from the truth. Immorality is devastating and causes intense collateral damage to the participant and their relationships. Our fight for maintaining higher values is against our instinctual nature which begs us to satisfy our individualism and replace God with immoral behavior that salves our pains. For certain we are not alone in this. Romans 3:23 says that we all fall short of the glory of God. We all sin. We all make mistakes though they might look different for different people.

For some it may sound overly spiritual to point out that this is a spiritual war to overcome sexual immorality by finding our path back to God. Even Christian men, who have shifted into a world view, may question the bible and anything it says. But, I have found the bible to be valid, current and relevant in this area to bring us back to life.

There are many books that can point to the validity of the Bible and its teaching. I believe that in this spiritual problem

of sexual immorality, the Bible holds relevant and very current principles that can lead a Christian men back to purity. As we apply these biblical principles and understand the warring landscape that we are in we can find a way back into the hands of God.

Outside of confused moral views, selfish choices, following our brutish lusts and appetites, we are also under spiritual attack from an enemy that wants us to be confused and misaligned in our beliefs toward God. The enemy is on the prowl, and Christians are the prey (1 Peter 5:8, Ephesians 6:12). Our battle isn't against flesh and blood but against an enemy the desires for us to have a moral lapse and a collapse in our purity and integrity.

We are inundated with immoral sensuality making every Christian man vulnerable to sexual sin.

1 Corinthians 10:12 "If you think you are standing firm then, be careful so that you don't fall." Our culture promotes promiscuity in most every TV show, magazine ad, and has brainwashed us as a culture to be sexually charged. Who hasn't heard the phrase that sex sells? That contributes to why it's no longer uncommon to hear about people falling into some form of sexual immorality, even leaders in the church. Our culture has painted an alluring picture to replace the purity of God with the fulfillment of personal passions and pleasures. I've heard someone say that if we feel we are beyond the reach of falling into sexual sin; if we feel we are immune, then we must think we are better than King David, smarter than Solomon & stronger than Sampson. To consider ourselves immune is embracing our culture's narcissistic pride which sets ourselves up for a fall

(Proverbs 16:18, Galatians 6:1 - watch so you are not tempted).

Just as healthy fruit trees have root systems, our human nature has deeply rooted belief systems that need to be renewed and transformed. The fruits of purity can be cultivated like the good fruit of a fruit tree. Fruit trees have deep roots. They can be planted and grown. Christian men are called to develop and cultivate the fruits of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22). The transformation and renewing of our mind is the cultivation of the fruits of the Spirit. We have a choice to cultivate our human nature, or godly spiritual nature. Our time, and how we spend it, can be a gauge to which belief system or “fruits” we feed and cultivate. We could look at cultivating purity as planting or pruning. So, if we are tending to our human individualism we would also be planting and growing the fruit that it produces. Planting to fulfill a sexually immoral desire is consuming and rotting, while tending to our spiritual fruits and nature is replenishing.

What is our culture’s belief system for Christian men? Today's successful man is a workaholic, overly busy, consumed by the securities that position and money will bring. This path of pursuit can strip a person of time for prayer and introspection. Instead of feeding the spirit and contributing to spiritual transformation, it promotes the opposite. It promotes reliance on our self-confident nature. Our willpower, and our self-reliance is strengthened. We end up relying on our personal strength instead of finding that we are helpless. We suppress our blindness to our powerlessness and the building of our true security in the true spiritual fruits of Christ.

The path of a Christian man that let's go to pursue a life in Jesus Christ will find himself relying on Christ's strength and principle instead of his own strength. This comes by elevating Jesus and by diminishing our own individualistic human securities, whether they be character traits, goals or financial desires. Slowing down our crazy lives and creating a balance to allow time for pursuing God will allow us to draw near to God instead of replace him with earthly pursuits.

After initial step of recognizing that we need to change and confessing that need to God, we also will need to make a paradigm shift in our belief ideas toward a mindset that realizes that our humanness is at war with our spirit nature. Our body is in competition for control of our values, character and spirit.

Each and every sin that we commit starts in our mind first. We have an immoral desire and are lured away by a thought to satisfy this selfish desire. This being the case, we need to take every thought captive and force ourselves to stop the immoral thinking. If we are thinking immorally, it is often because we are putting immoral input into our brain to cultivate those thoughts. Philippians 4:8 gives us an example of excellent thinking. It gives us a pattern of right heavenly thinking. It shows us how we can make impure thoughts compete for mind-space with our integrity instead of giving in to impurity and letting our thoughts run feral. Another way to say it is, we can push out our negative thoughts by replacing them with clean thoughts by following the advice of this verse (Philippians 4:8).

Instead of living a life of reaction, it's time to put up the radar and be aware of incoming thoughts and temptation. Be alert by thinking through what types of scenarios, situations, or people challenge our pure thoughts and actions. Early awareness to our attitudes, mindset, and preoccupation can be helpful in spotting impurity on the horizon. Anticipate that an enemy of impurity is marching toward us. We have to assume that this enemy, the principalities of the air, have placed a target on our back with intention to harm us (Ephesians 6:12). And what is the primary attack on today's Christian man? The attack is exploiting a weakness to sexual immorality.

Our defense is a life in Christ that cultivates purity thinking. This is what clear-minded thinking is. Biblical principle thinking that is filtered through Christ is purity thinking. On the other side, by allowing thoughts of tolerance to creep in, we allow our thoughts to fall into a fog of delusional thinking. It's always tougher to avoid a train wreck when you can't see 2 feet in front of you through the delusional fog.

It's always easier to keep your balance when your feet are grounded. We need precautions in place to keep us grounded. Being ungrounded in itself means that we have unbalanced, unclear thinking. We aren't thinking through the real consequences of what and how our indiscretion will cost us and others.

If we did an exercise of listing all those we hurt by our immorality and truly let ourselves look at the outcome of our actions, I believe much of our delusion during sin would vanish. Writing down the harm of our action would not only enlighten us to the selfishness of our actions but also show us our need for Christ and our dependence on his forgiveness. Being honest with ourselves by listing the outcome of going through with sin can be an eye opening process that should make us aware of the benefit of staying pure and pursuing God's design for purity. We are so forgetful, and so quickly become numb to our wrongs that we need people and processes in place to remind us of our need to change, and to figuratively die on a daily basis to our sinful human nature.

This new awareness can carry over to our habits and how we manage the situations that we can control. If a person loves to eat chocolate and is trying to cut chocolate out of their diet, it's easier to avoid eating chocolate when the house is empty of chocolate, as opposed to resist eating a chocolate bar that's on the counter in front of him. Resisting temptation is easiest when it is completely avoided.

When we empty our lives of tempting situations, we set ourselves up in this avoidance to have a first line of defense in resisting temptation. If the temptation does reach us, flee from it. Also, if temptation reaches us, expose it. Hiding the vice of tendency and pull toward temptation concentrates its allure and ignites a fuse of immoral passion, while being honest and open about it chases its power away by revealing it to be a liar and a fake.

It is more difficult for us to recognize our blindness to temptation when we are in the moment, or we have allowed ourselves to get too close to the tempting scenario. It is easier to see these oncoming temptations rising up if we are open and have people willing to hold us accountable (Ecclesiastes 4:10, or Proverbs 27:17).

A very helpful step in overcoming in the area of impurity temptation is open communication with a group of Christian men that are willing to lift us up when we fall, and ask us questions that hold us accountable. This parameter can be like a guardrail along a road that keeps a car from plunging over a cliff. No one can stop us from acting out sin, but having people who care enough to pray for us, and with us, and communicate openly about struggle will diffuse many of our biggest temptations.

Many churches have purity groups available, or home groups. Something to consider when trying to be grounded in a group or with those who can hold us accountable is that sexual issues are considered more taboo than anger, malice, greed, rage, and slander and other common Christian downfalls, so recovery type groups are a safer place to be open to share struggle. Reaching out to people, and allowing ourselves to be open about our struggles to other Christian men is one of the most powerful deterrents to sinning. Confession that we are struggling, or have sinned or are stuck in immoral thought (the pattern of our own selfish desires enticing us to sin) is often enough to lift the foggy delusional thinking that we use to rationalize or validate our sinful thoughts and actions. It's crazy how we don't reach out when we are sinking into this trap of sin. Repent and ask God for help as well as confess these things

to other Christian men before it becomes a noose that cinches down on our faith and puts us into bondage.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray for God's forgiveness in the area of sexual immorality and that God puts people into our life that can help us in our battle for freedom from sexual immorality.
2. Read Philippians 4:8 and Galatians 5:22-23
3. Call your local church or consider finding a recovery or purity group. Make a new commitment to purity thinking.

The Taste of Victory

Matthew 19:26

“With man this impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Why do some sports teams have championship trophies stacked up while others never seem to get a win? Victory follows coaches and teams that aren't necessarily an assembly of the most talented people. Winning teams exude an appearance of joy and passion for the game. It seems with winning teams, there is a culture of victory that carries into a winning belief system. Winning teams do not go into a game expecting to lose. This winning belief system then creates a synergy that translates into finishing at the top.

I've also seen other teams that are packed with talent, and stacked with all odds in their favor that can't seem to pull it together to win. I've seen football teams that win for three quarters, then throw interceptions and fumble until the other team ends up winning. I've seen soccer teams dominate for 85 minutes, then give up two goals to lose the game in the last five. Is it possible that these teams adopt a losing attitude?

Victory follows those who visualize the win. Caleb brought back a winning report about the Promised Land, where others saw defeat. He saw a different big picture than those

who traveled with him (Numbers 13:30). It's Ok to win and enjoy the taste of victory. It's ok to enjoy the game, to make mistakes and work through those mistakes. Winning teams play on the same field as the team that's losing (though they may not be enjoying it as much).

If you are reading this, it's likely that you have been the losing team in our struggle for purity. The odds may have seemed stacked in the enemies favor. But, the game is not over and we have a new coach and new team that can overcome impossible odds. We may have fumbled, or even let the enemy intercept our thoughts or winning attitude but minute is a new minute to do the right thing. Each day is a new beginning and a new opportunity to walk through life with purity.

God is willing and able to lead us to victory. He is equipping us to be new creations in him, and to overcome. Nothing is impossible to God, no matter how overwhelming it may appear. Embrace the verse in the bible from Isaiah 25:9 which says, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray that God helps us to have an attitude to overcome the struggle.
2. Read Isaiah 25:9 and Matthew 19:26
3. Look at areas in your life that you have trusted God and he has come through for you.

Addiction is Slavery

2 Peter 2:19

"People are slaves to whatever has mastered them."

Addiction is slavery. Addiction is submission to anything that has mastered us and led us into disoriented thinking that contradicts our values.

When we take good things and elevate them to ultimate things we become idolaters.

Our problem with confining our negative attributes to addiction is that we can place ourselves into a state of victimization instead of victory. Our starting point is misaligned by a degree. Our helplessness is a starting point but without a moral grounding there is no purpose for recovery. There

Our secular mindset, which promotes individualism and relativism, has utilized science to categorize every behavior into a disorder or addiction. Everything from going to church, praying too much, and dependence on marital relationships can be diagnosed as disorder or addiction, right along with alcohol or cocaine or psychopathic thinking. This may be extreme, which is likely a disorder also, but I'm trying to clarify the point that confining negative behavior to addiction is missing the real issue.

We've had issue with the medical community because they diagnose within confinement. We've experienced situations where we are sent elsewhere because some other doctor or clinic specializes in this or that. They isolate cause and

effect and never seem to tie it all together as a whole. Everyone looks to the next expert for all the answers to remove our pain, sickness, disorder or addiction.

This thinking is a scapegoat for actually thinking for ourselves. In our guts, we know something isn't right and that something is missing. That's because.... there is something missing. We are surrendering our God given faculty of prudent thought, assessing alternatives, employing values and principles, thinking through the consequences, taking and analyzing advice. We wait for experts to explore and tell us the pros and cons and suppress our own capacities and abilities, wanting someone else to tell us what's right, and what to do. This is not to minimize educated opinion or accurate thought toward a compulsive behavior.

If you are a hammer, every problem looks like a nail. Every negative behavior looks like an addiction or disorder. Every human experience could be classified as some type of disorder or addiction. I might be quibbling over verbal legalese, but I am trying to bring it back to the reality that everyone is messed up to some degree and we all are needing to change.

The self-righteous are just as far away from heaven as the drug addicts are. The parable of the prodigal son has two sons that address this. The older son needs the intervention by the father as much as the wayward son.

I don't deny gravity. Whether I like gravity, or believe in gravity, it is an invisible force that imposes its power on our life. It is neither good nor bad but it is present. Gravity is neither moral nor amoral, it is simply present. It is real while invisible. It is a part of the human experience as much a being born and dying. The gravity of life is that we are all dysfunctional and our only source of constancy is turning toward God for stability.

Addiction and disorder is simply present because of who we are. We are all full of addiction and disorder just by being human. We all have compulsion and personality baggage that could be considered dysfunctional. The true addiction is the attempt at trying to eliminate the human experience.

When we stop categorizing and compartmentalizing our experiences into addiction we can focus on the behaviors that we have engaged in that conflict with our Biblical view. Our pursuit is to change and address a broader issue. Our issue as unpopular as it is, is a sin nature.

Our addiction is driven by a sin nature that is most likely a breach of the first commandment of the Ten Commandments. We are idolaters making good things, ultimate things. We are elevating idols of our own desires ahead of the Living God. We are behaving in compliance with our nature by trying to replace God with our desires. We have become slaves to a sin master, a habit master. This is what is pushing our compulsions or negative behaviors.

We are not victims. We need to remove our pride and replace God on the throne in our life.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray that God provides freedom from the slavery of lust or whatever sexual sin has had power over you, and surrender to God's leadership.
2. Read 1 Corinthians 6.
3. Where have you taken positive things in your life and allowed them to be all consuming or become far more important in the balance of where they should be?

Living in the Purity Zone

Philippians 4:4

*Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say
rejoice*

There are times in our life when everything goes right. It seems like everything comes together perfectly. As a piggyback this off of thoughts about winning teams" victory and living in purity, I realize that living right also has times where it's easy, and everything seems easier.

At these times, joy & hope is abundant, life is happy, and our hearts are in order & at peace. Life would feel amazing they were like a day in the Restoration Zone. During these times of restoration we are doing something right. At these times we are staying in a circle of spiritual health.

When we fall out of this zone, it is usually because something that's happening our life that is removing the balance. The closer we center our lives, and focus on Christ, The more stable we become. Hebrews 13:8 says that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is our stability and our balance. Christ is our restoration zone.

In order to live in restoration and balance, we need to begin with Christ. A quantifiable thing that we can do to center our heart on Christ to stay in a healthy zone is to pray, to praise

and rejoice in him and allow our lives to be strengthened by his grace.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray and Thank God for the blessings in your life.
2. Read Philippians chapter 4
3. What are some of the things you notice you do, when things are going right?
4. Can these positive things be incorporated into your life on a regular basis to keep you in the zone?

Heart, Mind and Body

Matthew 5:27-28

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You Shall Not Commit Adultery; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Within the scope of purity, we are accountable down to the level of our thoughts. Sometimes in our life, thinking will be clear and other times it can embrace distortions. Sometimes our mental resolve will be stronger than other times. At the points of strength we need to build obedience, and exercise our muscles toward purity thinking.

Our thoughts words and actions are centered in the condition of our heart. Impurity thoughts are rooted in our hearts and need to be vetted out. Our impure actions are the evidence of our heart condition, such as a lustful look (Matthew 5:27-28).

It's no longer good enough to stop our immoral behavior. At the same time head knowledge & reason are no longer sufficient to establish lasting change. Knowing more about the transformation process of the heart or spirit isn't necessarily an improvement to our spiritual anemic condition. We can only see permanent change by retraining our heart to follow after the Spirit of God; by hiding the word

in our heart; by centering our heart on Christ (Psalms 119:11).

Our actions reflect our heart condition. Our moral restraint doesn't come from harnessing the body and its actions, but instead, from retraining our hearts to align with, and be filled with Christ. How do we fill our hearts with Christ? We open the door to him & shut the door on evil (Revelations 3:20). I believe that God loves us at our current place and current pace. He searches our hearts and understands the motives behind our thoughts. He is searching and looking for wholehearted devotion and a mind that is willing (1Chronicles 28:9). The focus of the Christian life is to transform the heart and mind, not to stop sinning. As our inner thoughts and heart condition change and become more Christ like, our modified behavior will become the outward evidence of our growth. Our body has a mind of its own with its desires and needs, but these can be traded for purity behaviors as our spirit is strengthened and transformed.

A willing mind will help us to follow through with actions that strengthen our connection with God and strengthen our spirit. Our spirit man can be strengthened and filled with Christ through prayer, fasting, reading the bible & meditating on God. Temptation can be endured when our spirit is in a right temperament.

All these things can help bring composure to our spiritual man. Incorporating these disciplines of prayer, fasting & meditating on the bible can allow God to search our heart & bring separation from our material environment and bodily distractions for that brief moment. Our lives can be placed before God for healing.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray for a clear mind and a renewed thought life.
2. Read 1 Peter chapter 1.
3. What areas could change in your life to reflect Christ better?
4. What attitudes surrounded your temptation (i.e. Anger, arrogance, hurt, stress)?

The Lust Illusion

Job 14:1-4

Mortals, born of woman, are of few days and full of trouble. They spring up like flowers and wither away; like fleeting shadows, they do not endure. Do you fix your eye on them? Will you bring them before you for judgment? Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!

Have you ever seen a card trick that is beyond belief? I had a friend that was amazing at card tricks. He made using “sleight of hand” and card tricks look easy. He made deception look easy. The card tricks that he did would boggle the mind until the secret to the trick was exposed.

People good at card tricks, don’t typically tell the secret to the card trick. One reason is because when the truth in the trick is discovered, it is a complete let down. It is a letdown to discover that what we thought we saw or what we were led to believe was an illusion. This is the truth of about the illusion of lust.

Lust uses sleight of hand to attempt to manipulate us into believing or wanting a fleeting vapor of a lie. Lust attempts to make us believe that we will have fulfillment or satisfaction when we chase after this lie. But, just as the

discovery that a card trick is a simple illusion, the fleeting misdirection of lust is an unfulfilling letdown.

When we see a card trick after we know how the illusion is created, we can pick up on the subtle misdirection that misleads us. We understand that the card trick is no more than trickery. The mystery that we built up around the trick is deflated and its allure collapsed.

Lust operates on nothing more than manipulated expectations. When we redirect this understanding of lust being an empty promise, we can apply it to the temptation in our life.

We can look at situations that would previously fuel intrigue and realize that it is a disguise to manipulate our spirit to believe a lie. We can understand that our clear thinking is being challenged by trying to shift our eyes from the truth to a temporary hope of our needs being satisfied by the temptation. Seeing the truth through the lie is different than suppressing a desire and having the willpower to overcome.

The trickery of a card trick is not as malicious as lust. Having the forethought to see through the intent of lust is like seeing someone place poison in the cup in front you. If you were to see this happen, you would understand that the beverage that may appear to quench thirst will make you sick or possibly kill. Lust is as malicious as someone slipping poison into your cup. Lust is not a fun deception like a card trick. It is intended to deceive and bring damage.

Taking the outlook that lust is deceptive and malicious will encourage our eyes to fix on the truth. When we stop allowing ourselves to believe that lust offers any hope of satisfaction or that it has any fulfilment, it will lose its power of seduction and manipulation.

Purity vision can only come from a heart of purity. This heart of purity can only be empowered by God's love. Our own attempts at purity by our effort outside of committing our effort to God for help is futile. Only God is pure and can bestow a spirit of purity in us. Only God can open our eyes to bring clarity to lust's lies. God desires to bring us into a place of right living and purity.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray that God open our eyes to the areas we are being tempted, seduced and manipulated to turn our eyes away from God and believe in a lie.
2. Read Job 14
3. After praying, are there areas or situations that you recognize as lies that try to offer hope or satisfaction but are really temptations that are leading you away from Jesus?

The Problem is Lust

Proverbs 6:25-26

Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes. For a prostitute can be had for a loaf of bread, but another man's wife preys on your very life.

We are fallen creatures. So, when we deal with sexual immorality, it is more than just a biological sex drive. We fight our nature that wants to eat forbidden fruit just because God prohibited it and we have instinctual rebellion against this authority.

The Bible makes it very clear what is acceptable, and that is keeping the marriage bed pure. And, as Christians, our command is to be absolutely pure in actions, and in our thought life. As married men we need to be completely faithful in body and mind.

As single men, we need to be completely abstinent mentally and physically.

The roots of our struggle is far deeper than the promiscuous behaviors. Part of understanding the appeal and our attraction to compulsive sexual behaviors is to understand ourselves better within the parameters of God's word.

Our material body and default nature is a rebel. In this rebellious state we are dominated and taken into captivity by our lusts and every kind of worldly desire. Romans 8:13 says that if we remain on this path of indulging our self we will die. Our competing nature, our spirit man, will live out life as a slave to the desires of our flesh until our physical body dies and we stand before God. It is a fight to the death between our two natures. If we want to live by the Spirit, then we need to mercilessly kill off the manifestations of our carnal side. Every deed that is an outcome of our natural fleshly man needs to be put to death. If we still are habitually giving over to sin, then we may need to reevaluate which team we are on (1 John 3:9). Our lust is evidence that our flesh is raising its army of desires to overpower and destroy our healthy spiritual man.

At a spirit level we must guard our hearts daily because until our flesh is killed off we will have to be in a fight for our very life and work to align our life under God's kingdom. We will need to implement Paul's resolve to be mastered by nothing (1 Corinthians 6:12) we need to capture and kill each lustful desire and deed and put it to rest in our life (Rom 6:12). But if we continue to act out with immoral behaviors, then sin is ruling over us as a master over a slave. Mercilessly put to death our carnal deeds.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray that God empowers us to live by the Spirit and guides our steps.
2. Read Proverbs 7

3. What desires are rooted in your "old self" need to be put to death?

Chasing a Lust Rainbow

Romans 13:11-14

Do this, knowing the time that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

We've all heard about stories of gold at the end of the rainbow. We also realize this is an untrue story made up by some clever storyteller in the past. This lust offers the same promises as gold at the end of the rainbow but that too is a lie. Lust is a lie that brings no relief as promised. It is never satisfied as it leads us to believe. In fact, lust is greedy. If it is allowed to take even one step into your house, it will try to do a hostile takeover. All too often we find ourselves starting to wager with lust's false promises. Yet, we still believe its chameleon charm or are misled by its persistence.

If I see a rainbow now, I don't think about it the same way as I did when I was a child. I do not fantasize about finding leprechauns and wealth from its gold. I don't chase rainbows

because I don't believe that there is gold at the end of a rainbow. I have made a shift in my perspective about gold and rainbows.

Lust is like a sleeper spy in a war. On the outside lust appears to be a friend, but its allegiance is to the enemy & it is only waiting for an opportune time for us to let our guard down so it can rise up to exploit our weakness to destroy us.

When we turn the light on lust & sin it loses its appeal. When we turn our thoughts to meditating about Jesus we are turning the light on lust and revealing its lies.

We can take steps to bring change to our outlook toward lust & sin. Our solution is to approach God & think about heavenly things (Colossians 3:2) as a barrier between our heart & the allure of sin.

Turning our eyes to God replaces lustful thinking with renewed thinking and a transformed perspective.

Until we mature and change our outlook at a spiritual level we will continue to struggle with impurity. Time spent in prayer and strategizing with God on how to overcome will diffuse lust and allow us the ability to put these desires to death.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray that God opens our eyes to where we've allowed our hearts to be susceptible to lust & sin, & for help to overcome.
2. Read Proverbs 27:20
3. Evaluate your current situation. Can you see where you are holding on to any false promises or hopes that could falsely be satisfied by lusting?

Eyes Are the Soul's Window

Luke 11:34

Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are healthy, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are unhealthy, your body also is full of darkness

God cannot look onto evil and we should follow the same plan with our eyes. Our eyes are the access point to our heart and to our soul. Mild compromises builds upon little compromises to construct a foundation of immortality. It gives the illusion of drifting into sin as opposed to decidedly revolting against God in that direction.

The new habits that we adopt can be compared to moving to a foreign country. Our normal way of doing things is no longer appropriate. We need to learn new customs new mannerisms and those need to truly become part of the new culture. Where we used to objectify people, we need to re-establish new processes in our thinking to categorize people into purity thinking. If we were to look at a woman now, we would need to consider her a daughter, sister or a mother or someone else's wife, instead of a thing that activates an attraction or objectification. Here is the subheading to this thought. We don't know the background, the values, the character or the life experiences behind a person's looks and need to place them into a different template of healthy thinking to overcome lustful thinking.

We have to view them from a perspective that gives the person value and would try to consider them as God would.

Our eyes are the inlet to our thinking and the first line of defense for inappropriate thinking.

Our change has to become clear at the level of thinking, and this will come from our change of heart. Like when we learn a foreign language. We may be able to speak, or read a language, but we have to get to the point of thinking in that language. We need to get fluent in that foreign language to the point of thinking the language.

One of the more popular books on Christian men's battle for talks about quickly looking away. This approach protects the eyes from taking in more input than our lusts can handle. I agree that this needs to be done, but also think it is not the action of looking away that will bring change, but instead, changing the perception of what we see and how we process what we see. It is impossible to avoid seeing lust activating things in our society where sensuality is flaunted. This being the case, we are going to have to adopt purity perception filters in partnership with the approach to looking away.

2 Peter 2:14 talks about having eyes full of adultery. If we think about this, these men who followed corrupt desire and a sinful nature (2 Peter 2:10) proactively fill their eyes with adulterous images. They are seeing the same images as the righteous men that are with them (2 Peter 2:13). But these men have used an adulterous lustful filter to perceive people with lust instead of purity. Our eyes need to have a

purity filter placed in our heart. Not only do we need to control our input, but we must change our perception of what input comes through our eyes to align with a godly perception. If we have had eyes full of adultery or lust, we need to empty our eyes of adultery and lust. We need to empty the tank that was full of adultery and fill it with purity.

Eyes are a muscle that need to be trained to look away. They need to be trained to restrain our sinful, bestial instincts (2 Peter 2:12) and begin educating ourselves in God's word. Education or reason alone isn't enough to bring us to purity but will point us to the reality of God.

A few verses from the Bible that I like and use for direction toward healthy eyes and purity perspective are:

Job 31:1 "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman."

And

Psalm 101:3 "I will not look with approval on anything that is vile. I hate what faithless people do; I will have no part in it."

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray that God renews your ability to look at people with love instead of lust. As in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-14), pray that God leads us out of temptation.
2. Read 2 Peter 2
3. Reinforce the training of your eyes by looking away from things that you might normally lust. Be aware of how often in a day this is happening.

Rest in Recovery

Psalms 91: 1-4

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

Being recovered to a spirit of purity is not a feeling. Also, it is not an act of our will power, our intellect, or reasoning. It is more like being rescued and resuscitated back to life.

Picture an emergency room situation with a patient that is unconscious and unresponsive after being pulled from a wrecked car. The patient is unable to move, to will, or to help their own healing. The patient needs intervention of those who can assess the situation and apply methods to keep the patient alive.

It is unlikely that a patient experiencing a trauma situation like this, and is brought back to consciousness, will stand up and skip their way out of the emergency room. More likely, if they make it out of the ER, they will face the slow process of bed ridden recovery, because our brokenness needs time to

heal. Our healing can only come from resting in this silence of recovery bed.

It used to be that people with tuberculosis were placed in the sun and fresh air as the therapy for their illness. As the rays of the sun soaked into the patient's body, the cure eventually would come. This is similar to our recovery and transformation to purity. It's not about our effort, but about being in the presence of Christ and allowing him, the Son, to apply his healing grace to our brokenness. Simply being in the presence of God, giving him access to our needs is enough. He is there and willing to help us overcome.

Initially our efforts at will power only aggravate the healing. For example, if a person breaks their leg and immediately tries to walk on it, the bones could separate further. When I was younger, I had surgery on a broken foot. The doctor gave me a timeframe to stay off of it while it healed and I recovered. Prior to the suggested time, I felt great so I resumed a normal lifestyle only to reinjure my foot and prolong the healing process. I was overconfident, and a bit delusional in my healing and abilities, leaving myself open to making the mistake of using a treadmill and going back to work too soon. It only extended how long I had to use crutches and led to further pain and a longer recovery.

Be content to lay on the recovery bed. What I mean is to take time just being with God in prayer. Being in God's presence is nothing more than lifting our eyes to him and saying we need help. We don't need to explain, defend, justify, or reason. We need to rest and heal in the light of God.

Take time today to slow down. Actually, take time to stop and look up to God for help. The chaos of our life will keep rushing by like a white water rapids, but stopping and resting in the presence of God can make it feel like it all come to a stop. Our best action for healing is to be still. God is the great physician, our healer. He desires for us to be restored and healthy.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray for God's covering and protection of your heart and mind
2. Read Psalms 91
3. Take a look at all the activities and responsibilities in your life and ask what can be removed to open time for God.
4. Take 5 minutes to stop and surrender your heart to God in prayer
5. Take a few minutes to just listen for the still small voice of God's direction and accept his healing forgiveness and grace.

Blueprint Battle Guide

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

1 Corinthians chapter 10 provides a template for overcoming sin. When I've read through 1 Corinthians 10, I have centered in on a few verses like first 12 the talks about only being tempted by what's common to man, or 31 which talks about doing everything for the glory of God.

I never prior realized that it also provides a template for purity in the battle for spiritual purity that we face. In the template verse 13 says the God provide a way out of temptation.

First of all it's pointed out that all the Israelites walked through the Red Sea , pressed through the desert, drank water provided for them from the same Rock, had the same spiritual food, had the same teaching, but something was amiss that made God angry with many of them.

Then it goes on to give examples of what Israelites did wrong, it infers what others were doing right. It provides examples, it points at certain attitudes, then provides actions.

The examples were provided to keep us from following their lead and fixing our heart and evil things. They were taking joy in the evil things in festively partaking in the sin of the pagan world. But, in these examples we are given examples inferring what to do and warning us of what not to do. We are told not to commit sexual immorality, not to test the Lord, and not to grumble at our circumstances.

These examples show us relevance to our current culture and our current mindsets. As the chapter goes on we come to the famous passage that says we only tempted but was common to man. Just prior to this however, it addresses an attitude of putting confidence in our own ability.

Verse 12 says that if you think you are standing firm then be careful so that you don't fall. The Israelites were saturated in teaching, miracles and firsthand accounts of God working in them but God was not pleased with them. Somewhere in the desert they elevated their own effort and ability into idolatry, self-worship, while replacing God with sexual fulfillment through immoral acts, wellbeing disgruntled at their situation and lack of self-fulfillment.

The suggestion of this verse is that none of us are superior in our own ability. If our attitudes are unchecked we can be caught in temptation. We are not above this process, and are not sanctioned from this war. But at a point to

realization, we can understand that we can turn back, and turn our back on sin because we aren't tempted beyond what we can bare and God does provide a way out. He provides an escape route through action.

It's interesting to me that the action plan that God provides is not fighting, and standing in the midst of the bullets. In fact, it appears that our strength is more in our weakness. Also, I find it interesting but it doesn't say that God removes us from the situation. He doesn't tell us to stand and fight, but instead to take the coward's way out. And in our cowardice we realize our weakness, we realize our own efforts are futile. Our best defense is to run away. Our best interest to avoid the battle because our tendency is to fall.

Some will continue to step into the line of fire of temptation. While this can be permissible is not constructive to standing or to helping other people stand.

But if we follow this battle template , if we do learn from other's mistakes we can develop a pattern of healthy living, building and clinging to right attitudes, avoiding and fleeing the temptation's that lead us astray.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray for strength for those you know who have struggled with sexual temptation.
2. Read 1 Corinthians chapter 10
3. Consider Examples of People that have fallen into impurity that you know or have heard about.

4. What areas have you been tempted and fallen into impurity?
5. What could you have done to avoid the temptation & impurity?

Revelation of Resistance

1 Peter 1:13-14

Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

We all sin. We all make mistakes and do wrong. Even the godliest person that you & I know is filled with the disease of sin. No one is flawless except for Jesus. Therefore our struggle will continue until we are with Jesus in eternity.

Before being a Christian, obviously we also sinned then. We would be led around or seduced by our animalistic instincts doing whatever filled the needs of self. We were blind to our selfishness and ignorant our lives being centered on our goals, wants, desires, and actions.

In essence we were trying to be our own god fashioning a life that pursued only our comfort. Unfortunately, this life of self-worship builds patterns that don't change overnight. Many of these ignorant actions carryover into our Christianity.

Now as a new creation, we go to war against these old alliances of sin, and self-centeredness, and natural human

desire that come against our healthy Christian growth.

What may have been normal in our ignorance, is now realized to be a traitor. Our transformation comes from discovering, and reevaluating our life toward change. We are no longer ignorant to the fact that our nature is in direct rebellion against God's will. Now, we have to become awake and enlightened toward God's will for us to change. We are called to refashion these patterns, lusts and human desire into God's directed path. We are called to crucify these old ways, to be clear minded, thinking very soberly, by restraining, retraining and resisting our old ways until the old ways starve to death and godly behaviors rise up in place of them.

It is only by God's grace that we can change. It is a combination changing our inner spirit, and being changed by God's Spirit. Our efforts and personal growth won't get us to heaven, but as an evidence of God's growth in us, we will move toward change. We will resist everything that sets self against God. Our purity, and our effort toward changing old patterns will be evidence of God's growing in us. And this growth only comes from inner, real, heart level change provided by God's love and grace and forgiveness.

For some Christian men the struggle and rooted sin can go deeper and restraint seems impossible. For these men, bringing the issue into the light by talking to other Christian men (keeping in mind that all are sinners, most men struggle to some capacity in this area, and groups addressing this need are developing at the local church level to help) and going to your local church for initial help

will be a good starting point. Many men have deep rooted patterns that go deeper than just resistance and need a group of Christian brothers to extend a hand to lift them up off the ground.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray for heart level change in the area of purity. Also, pray for help and awareness toward resisting old patterns and desires.
2. Read 1 Peter 1
3. Are there patterns, desires or behaviors that have carried into your Christian walk that are still a struggle & need to be restrained?

Standing Silent No More

1 John 5:16a

"If you see any brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death, you should pray and God will give them life."

I have children and have experienced the hurt and desperate gut wrenching feeling of watching a child fall while being too far away to catch the fall. I would never let my little kids fall into broken glass or when there was a chance of injury if I had the chance to prevent it. That same desperate feeling can transition to other brothers in Christ who are falling into the broken glass of impurity.

Christian men are under attack, and in a battle for their purity. The chances are good that you know other Christian men who've given in, or are being tempted by impurity and are getting close to, or are flirting with moral collapse. We should be cognizant of this struggle in order to help. Not everyone is equipped to handle the emotional and painful chaos that surrounds this issue but we can pray for brothers in Christ. We can reach out and point people toward healing.

As men, we may feel alone in this battle, but we are not alone. The unfortunate part of struggling in this area is that many of our churches have placed a higher taboo on sexual

sin than other sins. A person with an alcohol addiction can find recovery, and someone with a foul mouth is often dismissed as still growing up in Christ, while the man struggling to overcome lust is shamed. It's very true that sexual sins are very destructive, and those who think otherwise are misled. But, sin is sin, and we are all sinners dealing with our own issues, and we all will stand alone before God to discuss those. My view is that it is better to discuss it before it's too late.

We would be naïve to think that infidelities and impurity are isolated to the world and those outside the church who don't believe in God. Purity in the church is a train wreck and those included in its wreckage are God fearing Christian men alongside pastors, successful business people, people of position, as well as the unseen and unknown people. I've seen statistics that reveal 3 out of 4 men who call themselves a Christian have succumbed to the temptation to look at pornography online. I've seen others that say 40-60% of these men look at immoral images on a consistent basis. I believe it and understand the harm of this statistic because I am one who's damaged my marriage and family this way.

Many of these men end up in serious bondage that and paralyzing shame.

We can't stand silent watching fellow brothers march off the cliff of immoral decisions, but what can be done? Should we shame these broken souls into behaving differently? No, we should tend to the wounded. Galatians 6:1 suggests we should attempt to restore them gently. We should allow the Spirit of God to lead, pray and approach those in need with a gentle spirit of restoration.

We need to extend a hand as we walk close enough to the arms of God, so that he can catch us when we fall. Our ever going quest is to seek for personal purity and Spirit led internal transformation as we seek to grow to reflect the image of Christ. We have to be alert and aware that we are not immune, but we are also not intended to walk alone, or struggle alone. Our church is in desperate need, and the fight is upon us.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray for a pure heart and strength with your own struggles. Pray for those in bondage that God rescues them. Pray for those being hurt and injured by those who've fallen to impurity.
2. Read 1 John 5
3. Commit to finding an accountability group at your church or a local church.

Five Smooth Stones

1Samuel 16:7

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

David had five smooth stones to fight Goliath. I'm not sure if they really had a biblical representation, but I've often wondered why he chose smooth stones instead of jagged stones, or why he chose five stones instead of 3, or 10. Outside of the questions about the stones, some thoughts stuck out to me about the story of David and Goliath that may help us move closer to a life in God and purity. So in representation of the five stones, I noted five attributes of David, a man after God's own heart.

Stone 1

David showed faith, expectation, trust & purpose. He had vision to look beyond the obvious, or beyond the mass opinion, & to rise above labels. While the actual army soldiers were lining up and trembling in fear David was hearing the insult against his faith. He didn't cower in fear but instead, was in shock as to why people were afraid instead of angry. He had a belief or trust that God was bigger than the Giant that taunted and mocked and shamed God's people. It doesn't say how interested David was in the reward that was offered, but he it's for sure that when he faced Goliath it was about the insults against God.

Stone 2

He gave himself no retreat and no backward option. He placed himself in a life and death situation, which appeared to favor Goliath, with a vulnerable purposed commitment. He did not have armor or a shield bearer. He wasn't a trained fighter, but instead was confident that he had a shot at winning. He had an absolute resolve. It reminds me about the stories where the armies burn their ships & bridges with no chance of escape unless victory attained. It also reminds me of the call to "give me freedom or give me death." His victory over a lion and a bear had eliminated a few of his fears of giants.

Stone 3

He took the opportunity that was given to him in a defining moment and didn't back pedal at this serious point of decision. If I can use a sports analogy, he was given the chance to take the shot from half court in basketball with 1 second left. A lot of people have used the analogy that diamonds are created under pressure. David rose up to fame through this one event. It appeared that he was created by this one event, but his backstory proves that it was revealed at this moment. Our purity or lack of it is revealed by the actions behind the scenes.

Stone 4

In the isolation of being a shepherd David was shaped into the man who would stand up to a giant and a bully. He wasn't built like his brothers and wasn't old enough to stand alone without being questioned. But in the private space of the fields he faced his challenges and had to be built to overcome. He utilized the unique gifts that God had given him to exercise his strengths. He had to function and live within his own limitations and live from the heart. He wasn't considered strong in man's eyes or the outward appearance but his heart was pleasing to God.

Stone 5

David's life was not bliss. In fact he was overlooked in significance by his father, his brother told him he was wicked, arrogant, & evil despite being anointed. Yet, he maintained a big picture vision, spoke truth, and confessed victory, but did not embrace an attitude of defeat. He wasn't reliant on the exterior, the tools, the weapons, the upgrades in armor, but about doing what was right before God.

In the lives of us who have fallen at times to impurity, there is a hope that learning more or applying tools and tactics will solve our issues and bring us into a healthy transformation before God. The truth is that leaning on these things, leaning on the next scientific brain discovery can lead to forming a brittle God. Our change has to start internally with God's transforming forgiveness and lead to outward victory. The giant we face is the worldly desires of our heart that taunt us and shame us. If we take hold of these 5 smooth stones that David did, we will strengthen our walk toward purity.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray that God walks before us, pulling us into a life of purity and surrender to his plan.
2. Read 1 Samuel 17 the story of David and Goliath
3. What changes would you make in your life when you envision your life with absolute purity and God's intervention? What would your life look like?

Whack – a – Mole Purity

1 Peter 5:8

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

JR Tolkien, in Lord of the Rings, has a line that points to the ever changing forms of evil. It says, “Ever will some new evil be hatched... beyond the guess of Elves and Men.”

When I read this it made me think of our efforts at suppressing behavior. I’m pretty certain our war with sin will last for our lifetime and it is proven when we overcome in one area, another area of sin surfaces and needs to be worked on by God’s transforming power. When we do overcome in some bad behavior or thought pattern, we confirm Tolkien’s thought that evil always seems to resurface in one form or another. Evil is clever and ever changing to connive and steal the peace, strength and life of Christian men (John 10:10).

We are an enemy to evil, as much as evil is our enemy. As Christians, we are in a cage fight for our life. One winner will walk out alive. Our fight for purity and general righteous living is not a fun match. It is a pro-rank fight to the finish. It is a real fight but we do have the advantage that Christianity is not a dualistic view where good is as powerful

as evil when placed in the same cage. God is all powerful. He is not equal or below evil's grip.

We who've asked Christ into our life are under God's protection. Sometimes we are unaware of this. Evil is always changing form and never fighting fair, looking for a split moment to sucker punch us with a personalized form of temptation. We need to learn to be aware & to distrust temptation and see it as the devil it is. We may defeat evil in one form, but we must be aware that it is always revising its strategy to circle back and attack again.

At carnivals and arcades they sometimes have games where little moles or gofers randomly pop up out of holes on a table while the player tries to hit them on the head with a foam hammer. As soon as one is hit, it sinks under the table while another pops up. That is how our pursuit of purity is, and why we can't ever become overly confident that we know it all or have passed every test.

We may overcome lust, while behind us, lust is formulating a new plan of attack that will reveal our next area of weakness. Our defense to this is to stay in the light of God. Being aware and understanding that we are not capable of seeing, detecting, or acting in a right manner without God is our greatest strength.

We could picture our struggle or fight for purity as being like someone trying to survive by a fire in the woods at night while being stalked and hunted by wolves or bears or big cats. These predators are equipped to smell out prey, to

hunt and to kill. The person trying to survive can't hope to live through the night unless they have the fire. The fire pushes the predators into the outlying shadow while providing a circle of light and warmth. It is by extension of the fire that the survivor survives the night.

In this analogy the fire and firelight are God and his love, forgiveness and grace extending a circle of protection around us. We are likely blind to the oncoming temptation, or predator. If we stay close to God's light, the protective circle around us enables us to have light to see further. But, if we stray too close to the edge of the shadow, or we completely leave the safety of God's protection, we open ourselves up to an attack on our life.

Circling back to the beginning of this thought, evil can be in any shape. We need to be aware that the predator is lurking and waiting to attack us from the shadows, while the protective solution is to seek being close to God and living in the open light of God.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray that God reveals areas in our life where we need protection in our purity and that we growing closer to God in these areas.
2. Read Luke 22:31 and Acts 26.
3. What areas have you found yourself walking toward the outer light of the campfire like the survivor in the above analogy? What areas have you been tempted to leave God's shelter and protective covering? Have you overcome

something that challenges you in a different form?

Secret Lives and Prayer

1 Corinthians 10:31

*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do,
do it all for the glory of God.*

I heard a saying by John Owens along the lines that a minister may fill his pews, his communion roll, the mouths of his public; but, what that minister is on his knees in secret, before the Lord God Almighty; that is what he is and no more.

Living a life of purity in Christ is more than a restructuring of behaviors. It is more than stopping bad actions and reactions and replacing them with actions that fit a Christian mold. The consequences of our sins may follow us long after we change, grow up and find healing for ourselves and those we've hurt. Living in purity is not about removing pain or suffering, or pleasing family or church leadership. Moving toward a life of purity is an escape from a prison toward freedom.

On the outside, people may remember the unchanged man that lived secretly behind a mask while struggling with a double life. There may be some people in your family or church that never change a negative opinion about you, your internal change, or the validity of your change.

I remember when TV evangelist Jimmy Swaggart was exposed for sexual immorality. It was shocking to Christians, and devastating to his ministry. Since that time, decades later, he is back on TV, yet, I still remember the sex scandal of the Jimmy Swaggart of the past. I don't follow his ministry, but I can imagine that in order for him to be back in ministry, he has had to do some extreme evaluation of personal growth. I can imagine he has dealt with the trauma he's inflicted, dealt with handling personal shame, fear of rejection from God and people, and massive life consequences. I'm sure he realizes that some will never let go of his past and his sin. In those last decades his life has paid a price while life moved forward after his secret life was exposed. He has probably had many doubts and times where he wanted to run away from God and to God.

We as people do horrific things, and our tendency is to put all effort into stopping the behavior. But this is dodging of the real problem. Our unchanged, unharnessed desires that spawn from our evil hearts need to be laid bare on the surgery table for God to go to work eradicating our unholiness. Our past may never be reconciled, and the pain we've caused by our actions may never be reimbursed, but, that is all a frontage road alongside who we are becoming in Jesus. Who we are, and are becoming on our knees in prayer before God is ultimately the measure of who we are.

We live with our choices, and must face those that have been acted on out of lust and immoral desires. We are men of Christ and have accountability to act within the parameters of purity no matter our situation or surrounding circumstances. Outwardly we need to put to death the intolerable and inappropriate behaviors, whether private or public. Inwardly we need to approach God in prayer and offer our passions and desires up to God for purification. As

John Owens pointed out, we amount to nothing more than who we are on our knees before the Lord God Almighty.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray that God can bring continued protection and restoration into our life.
2. Read Proverbs 11:5-6
3. Shame can overwhelm and paralyze. List areas where God has shown you love in your life with undeniable blessing.

Death to Performance Pride

Matthew 23:27-28

*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the
outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full
of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. "So
you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but
inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and
lawlessness*

The bible verses, Colossians 2:20-23, talks about Christians who have abandoned the ideology and the world's viewpoint of wisdom and a warning of drifting back to these principles. The world is wise in its own eyes. Christians who re-embrace this vein of thought justify appearing wise within self-made religion which offers no value to overcoming the indulgence of our flesh. Instead of fulfilling the intention of building our spiritual strength and killing our flesh nature we can be also negatively take pride in our humility and actions of religiosity like those who wear sack-cloth & a solemn face when fasting. We can take a distorted form of pride in our suffering that seeks accolades in our performance which somehow, we feel, should earn a blessing due to religious effort or our own merits.

The reward we receive, when we adopt this type of pride, is the attention that is received, not the moving of God's Spirit to action. If we incubate a performance-based purity we are doing the same thing as someone who is grabbing for

acceptance and trying to please people “for show” instead of trying to be pleasing God.

Some of the accountability groups I've seen function more to check people's status when they screw up or don't screw up. They work more as a confession panel and contribute more toward encouraging a performance type group. True accountability and change is looking at inward change in recovery, restoration and filling the gap to help move past the negative behavior to a healthy behavior with Gods strength and for his glory and an act of worship.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve believed the subtle lie that the serpent used to undermine them. They rehearsed and pondered this lie in their minds, and then acted on the lie. Our best offense against the lies of the enemy is to rehearse truth, and as Jesus, did use the Bible scripture as a defense and grounding.

Our situations do not determine our responses. Our responses come from the condition of our spirit; our spiritual side. It's true that our Spiritual side of our life has been shaped by our experiences, our traumas, our cultural influences, backgrounds and belief systems. But, when we are told to seek being renewed and transformed (Romans 12:2), it is our spirit that needs transformation. This transformation comes out of an act of worship to God. As it was, our spirit being left in the hands of our culture and its influences, has been left deformed and anorexic and selfishly driven toward fleshly indulgence. We have to stop taking on an attitude of pride in our successes, positive changes, and even sufferings as a badge recognizing our

changes. Our pride in our own wisdom, and personal effort needs to transition to an attitude of worship. Our transformation isn't for recognition but in order to promote sound judgement that presents a life acceptable to God as worship. Our changed actions are to be the fruit of our changed spirit, transformed as an act of worship to be acceptable to God.

Our motives to impress people by how much we've learned or changed is an effort based attitude that credits our own efforts for our transformations instead of acknowledging God's grace and intervention for our healing.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray and thank God that he has not withdrawn from us in our journey toward purity. As an act of worship acknowledge God as the only strength we have toward change. Pray for clear thinking that is acceptable and honoring to God.
2. Read
3. Reinforce this thought by thinking through areas where you have taken pride in negative emotions, or sought out sympathy for negative actions (i.e. someone who has been abused or had a bad upbringing may try to get sympathy for getting into drugs to cope. Or, a spouse withheld intimacy, so looking at inappropriate images online was justified).

Testing Our Doubts

Psalms 36:2

“in his own eyes, he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his own sin”

None of us can be completely objective toward our own faults or flaws because we have too much at stake. All of us tend to backpedal to justify our choices, our thought process, and opinions. Sometimes it's difficult to swallow that everything that we've put our trust in is wrong, or that we have been misled and believed a lie.

When juries are picked they're asked questions toward being indifferent. We want juries that can look at a situation without the connection of emotional ties or personal involvement. We want a group that can make an assessment of facts without the group having interest in gaining or losing. We need them to assess by providing an unbiased judgement.

We are not in that same position when we talk about God, or our opinions because our different values, our relationships, or our reputation are at stake. We could easily view it as a personal attack when we are in the wrong.

We need to doubt this mindset and open up to the fact that we may be incorrect.

We need to question our intentions and be open to the fear of invalidation. We need to be tolerant to our own distorted thinking with the pursuit of accurate thinking that lines up with the Bible.

Our own advice is faulty and predictably bent toward the wrong direction. I'm trying to address the infected mindset that I sometimes have and have seen in others; the one that portrays openness towards opinions or differences of opinions yet still has a bigoted outlook. I'm trying to exploit that certain perspective which portrays being open minded toward different views yet is oblivious to the actual intolerance of any view that opposes the person's current view. The strange issue that I see we have is that we end up only being tolerant to our similar views and engrained beliefs. Then we try to fit our world view and even God's word into our confined and narrow opinions. We all have our prejudices, and this is a call to doubt our prejudices. This is an alert to myself and all reading to question, to test and approve our opinions to ensure they are adequately aligned with God's purpose. This is a nudge to assess that our views aren't mirroring a godless cultural tolerance and are becoming tolerant through love and mirroring God's will.

Our only hope to clear thinking and accurate perspective is to reduce our self, and rely more on Christ and his healing. As our faith increases we will learn that we are helpless, that it's OK to be invalidated or have a wrong opinion that needs correction. It's OK to have considered our self to be tolerant to other people's views while enforcing our views. As we grow and adopt an attitude of love, our faith will grow and our thinking will become more stable and understanding.

We will begin to reflect Christ's image instead of our own self driven opinions.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray opens our eyes to viewpoints that we may need to abandon that take us away from God.
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5
3. Can you think of areas in your thinking that justify your opinions that may not be in alignment with God's view? Are there areas in your thinking that could be challenged as cultural opinion instead of God's will?

Tuning Our Lust

Psalms 66:16-19

Come and hear, all who fear God, and I will tell of what He has done for my soul. I cried to Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue. If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear; but certainly God has heard; he has given heed to the voice of my prayer.

Tuning a guitar is a bit of an art. If a string on the guitar is out of tune, the player has to listen and focus on the pitch of the note to hear if it is a note higher, lower or in tune. Changing from living in lust is similar to tuning a guitar.

Our lusts that have derived, from our personal desires, have left us tone deaf in a way toward what is right or wrong. Lusting has deadened our sense to hear if we are flat or sharp or off tune in our heart condition. We need to re-learn the notes to purity and tune our heart desires from selfish lust to selfless love.

Another example of tuning our lust would be like trying to get to a certain radio station. When we are trying to get a clear sound, we dial in the frequency to the correct station. If we stop above or below the right frequency, we get static and a garbled station. But, when we fine tune the dial we can get a clear, static free sound.

Living in purity is practicing a focused effort of tuning our thoughts into heavenly thoughts. It is an effort of captivating thoughts and aligning them with God's word. If we are metaphorically trying to live in right-hearted purity zone, we will dial in on our thoughts and listen for static-y and distorted thoughts of lust and impurity. The static of life, which could be anything that causes increasing spiritual background noise or temptation will cause God's voice of direction in our life to be less recognizable. It will also cause the voice of temptation to be louder and less recognizable; therefor, being more prone to misinterpretation. As static increases, temptation will seem more influential and justifiable. God's voice is overpowered by static noise.

When we don't hear God's voice of direction in our life, the static of temptation will take over and drown out pure thinking. God's voice isn't in the static, and chaos but a still small voice to be listened intently after (1 Kings 19:12).

We use the word captivate, or take captive thoughts, but tuning our lustful thoughts into pure thoughts also includes listening. We must listen for the right notes like tuning a guitar, or the right channel, like finding a radio station. We need to Listen, Listen, and Listen for God's voice through the noise of life.

Static and chaos and temptation in life is the overpowering predominant path. But, proactively slowing down to hear God's voice is the prudent path to purity. In order to tune our lust, we need to listen to find the true heart of purity in

God while removing the static and off notes. We need to look and listen to be aware when our thinking is off tune and quickly shift to purity thinking. As we do this, it will become more natural and will be easier.

The bible says to resist the devil and he will flee. As we stay on tune by resisting and removing static, removing the impurity and listening for ways to incorporate purity, listen for God's voice and remove the static.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Pray that we can hear God's direction clearly and that he will lead us away from temptation and deliver us from evil.
2. Read Proverbs 1:5
3. What background noise can you remove to hear God better and clarify integrity?